

Mindful Minute

A Mental Health Resource for Parents

VOLUME 07

Back-to-School and Your Child's Mental Health

As students head back to school, the excitement of new routines can be accompanied by stress and anxiety. Changes in schedules, social dynamics, and academic demands can impact a child's mental health in subtle ways. Signs to watch for include mood swings, difficulty sleeping, irritability, or withdrawal from activities they usually enjoy.

Parents can support their children by maintaining open communication, asking about their day and listening without judgment. Establishing consistent routines for sleep, meals, and homework provides stability, while encouraging friendships and group activities helps children feel connected. Modeling self-care also teaches healthy coping strategies. Prioritizing mental health early sets the tone for resilience and success.



Helpful Resources

Please scan the QR code to explore a variety of mental health articles and videos.



Communication Strategies

Starting a new school year can be both exciting and stressful for children. Parents can support their kids through intentional communication using these strategies:

- **Ask open-ended questions:** Encourage children to share feelings by asking, "What are you looking forward to this year?" or "Is there anything that worries you?"
- **Listen actively and validate feelings:** Show empathy and acknowledge their emotions, even if they seem minor.
- **Establish daily check-ins:** Create regular opportunities to talk, such as during dinner or car rides.
- **Encourage problem-solving:** Discuss challenges together and explore possible solutions rather than immediately giving answers.
- **Celebrate small successes:** Recognize progress to build confidence and motivation.

Consistent, empathetic communication helps children feel heard, supported, and ready to navigate the school year with resilience.

Family Bonding Activity

Think of family bonding in terms of quality, not quantity. Having a screen-free dinner together creates multiple opportunities for family bonding.

1. The whole family can help cook dinner and clean up while you listen to some upbeat music (even the little ones will get a kick out of getting to sit on the counter and watch).
2. Assign each person the responsibility of coming up with a meal idea. You might end up eating spaghetti and mac n cheese, but at least you didn't have to come up with 'what's for dinner.'
3. Use dinner time to celebrate an achievement – make a toast to achievements large and small such as a good report card, a positive teacher's note, or something nice said about you. It can also be a time for the parent to share something that they have achieved because parent achievements need to be celebrated, too!

So pause the TV, put down the phones and tablets, and have dinner as a family. It can be a special time for the whole family to come together, communicate, and celebrate each other.



Back-to-School Self-Care for Parents

As children head back to school, parents often juggle busy mornings, homework routines, and extracurricular schedules. Amid the hustle, it's easy to forget your own well-being. Prioritizing self-care helps you stay energized, patient, and present for your family. Simple steps make a big difference

Self-Care Tips for Parents:

- Take short breaks during the day to breathe or stretch.
- Enjoy a quiet cup of coffee or tea without distractions.
- Practice mindfulness or meditation for a few minutes each day.
- Schedule time for regular exercise or a walk outside.
- Maintain a consistent sleep routine.
- Set boundaries and ask for help when needed.
- Caring for yourself isn't selfish—it helps you care for your children with more focus and calm.